In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Much has been said about women in Islam but mostly from people who know very little about Islam. Islam liberated women 1400 years ago. Long before the suffragette and "women's right" movements came into play, women were given human rights such as inheritance, the right to own property, education, and to choose a husband.
Islam is the fastest growing way of life in the West and 80% of the reverts to Islam in the USA and the majority in the UK are women ('Times' newspaper 9/11/93).
If you know little about women in Islam you should ask yourself why so many "liberated" Western women want to become Muslims?

Previous Injustices to Women

Eve was and is viewed as an evil temptress responsible for the fall of Adam and hence responsible for the 'original sin' in the Old Testament.

In ancient Rome women had absolutely no legal status, and power was given to their father, brothers or husbands.

Late 19th Century English Common Law stated that a woman's possessions belonged to her husband. Only in 1887 were women allowed to own property.

Cambridge and Oxford Universities gave equal rights to education for women in 1964.

Compare the above to the status and rights of women in Islam. These rights were given more than 1400 years ago.

The Spiritual Aspect

In Islam there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship to Almighty God (Allaah) is concerned, as both are promised reward for good conduct and punishment for evil conduct.
"For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise, for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward." *[Qur'an, 33:35]*

The Social Aspect

At the time of the emergence of Islam it was socially accepted by the Arabs and most societies to treat women poorly and to favour males. Islam made it a part of faith to treat women well. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) taught, ***"The most perfect amongst believers in faith is the best in conduct. And the best of you is the best to his wife"***

The Importance of Education

Islam also required that girls were treated kindly, justly and greatly encouraged educating them. The Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) said "Seeking of knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim." The order to seek knowledge and be educated is aimed equally at both sexes.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage in Islam is seen not only to perpetuate human life but is also a source of emotional well being and spiritual harmony. The Qur'an emphasizes this essential unity of man and woman in a most beautiful simile:
"They *(your wives)* ***are your garment and you are a garment for them."*** *[Qur'an, 2:187]*

Just as a garment hides our nakedness, a husband and wife, by entering into the relationship of marriage, secure each other's chastity. The garment gives comfort to the body; similarly the husband gives comfort to his wife and vice versa. The garment is grace, beauty, and embellishment of the body, so too are wives to their husbands as their husbands are to them.

The basis of the marriage is love and mercy as mentioned in the Qur'an: ***"And among His signs is this: That He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind*** *(in them)****, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are signs for people who reflect."*** *[Qur'an, 30:21]*

Instead of being forced to marry against their will, Muslim women are allowed to play an active part in choosing their husband. And do not (like many people believe) have to marry anyone against their will. Indeed a marriage against the will of the girl is invalid in Islamic Law.

The status of being an individual partner in marriage is emphasised by the fact the woman keeps her maiden name after marriage. This is the opposite of what occurs in the West, which itself is based on the Greco-Roman culture, where women took the name of the husband, because the woman was considered the property of the man.
Divorce is allowed in Islam, but must be amicable and both parties must speak kindly and with dignity to each other.

The Mother

Islam recognises the sacrifices parents (especially the mother) makes in bringing up children. The mother thus has a very honoured position in Islam.

The Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) advised a man who asked, "O Messenger of God, who among the people is the most worthy of my good company?" The Prophet said, "Your mother". The man said "Then who else?". The Prophet said, "Your mother". The man asked, "Then who else?" So the Prophet replied again "Your mother". Then the man asked "Then who else?" The Prophet said, "Your father."

This shows that the mother is given three times the likes of kindness and good treatment as the father.

Kindness to both parents is considered in Islam to be next to the worship of God.
"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none save Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour." *[Qur'an, 17:23]*

The Veil

Women in Islam are considered to be very precious and beautiful and therefore are respected and honoured. The veil is seen by Muslim women as liberation rather than oppression as it enables them to be accepted for their mind, personality and spirituality instead of being judged according to their physical attributes. The veil ensures protection rather than exploitation. The exploitation of women and their bodies by men is one of the causes of the increase in crime such as rape, assault and child abuse.

It is interesting that when nuns dress similarly to Muslim women, they are viewed with respect, however Muslim women are thought of as being oppressed. The respect in which women and their bodies are held in Islam is emphasised by the fact that a man found guilty of rape in an Islamic society could face the death penalty, but in this country men can get out of jail in a few

years. This indicates the gravity with which Muslims view crimes against women.

Economics and the Right to Work

Islam decreed a right which was deprived before it, the right of independent ownership and inheritance. According to Islamic law, a woman's right to her money, real estate or other properties is fully acknowledged. With regard to the woman's right to seek employment it should be stated first that Islam regards her role in society as a mother and a wife as the most sacred and essential one. A mother's place cannot be replaced by maids or baby-sitters.

However, Islam does not forbid women from seeking employment, especially in positions which are needed by society e.g. nursing, teaching and medicine.

A Man in Islam is fully responsible for the maintenance of his wife, his children and in some cases, his needy relatives, especially the females. This responsibility is neither wavered nor reduced because of his wife's wealth or because of her access to any personal income gained from work, rent, profit or any other legal means.

This variation of financial responsibility between man and woman is reflected in the inheritance rights, she inherits less because her financial responsibility is less.

Polygamy

Whenever Islam is mentioned, people talk about the question of four wives. It is important to note, that generally, polygamous marriages are the exception rather than the rule as the Quran indicates:

"Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), **then marry only one."** [Qur'an, 4:3]

Thus if men have extra wives they must act justly with their wives, and each wife must be provided for equally. This is in stark contrast with a system where men have many extra-marital affairs, everything is hidden and the women and children who are born have very little, if any rights. Interestingly many Jews and Christians criticise Islam for polygamy. However, most of the Prophets in the Old Testament had numerous wives. Also Jesus (Peace be Upon Him) never revoked the Jewish law on polygamy, thus implicitly agreeing with it. In defence of polygamy, it could also be said that there are more women in the world than men (i.e. women live longer, less die in wars, the extra genetic information in a woman's extra x-chromosome has been shown to protect female babies from death in the womb or soon after birth) therefore it is just a way of ensuring all women can get married. Thus as married women they can be maintained financially and also fulfil their role as a wife and a mother.

Conclusion

To understand the status of women in Islam, we need to realise that Islam asserts that although men and women are equal in the sight of God, they are inherently different, therefore the laws governing them are different. It is clear that many men (often due to ignorance or culture) treat their wives badly, but this is a flaw of the individual and not the religion.

The basic reason why Muslims do anything is because we believe that the Qur'an is one of God's miracles, the Word of God, in a complete and unadulterated form, and Muhammed (Peace be Upon Him) is His final Messenger, and as such we follow the divine teachings.
Why not find out for yourself if the Qur'an is really a miracle, it is still unchanged today (as prophesised). Check for yourself if they are the words of God. Why not find out more about the man Muhammad? Was he really a Messenger of God?

"And if you are in doubt as to what we have revealed to our servant then produce a chapter like it and call your witnesses or helpers besides God if you are truthful, But if you cannot, and of a surety you cannot, then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones which is prepared for those who reject faith." [Qur'an, 2:22-3]

You owe it to yourself to learn more about Islaam, the only true monotheistic faith, the religion of all Prophets and Messengers. We invite you to study the Qu'ran and to base your opinions on the evidences therein.

"You denied my revelations although you knew nothing of them. What was it you were doing?" [Qur'an, 27:84]

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